

A Brave New World – Chapter 1 – The Lady President

Barbara Childs hadn't expected to win the election held the week before. The vote had been counted within 5 days of the election and to her surprise she had won. The election had been most unusual in several respects. Each state had elected two Senators, but determining the number of Representatives was problematic at best.

Under the Constitution, each state is entitled to at least one Representative, serving a two-year term. Congress fixes the size of the House of Representatives, which was in 2004, 435, and the procedure of apportioning the number among the states.

The last time the House had established the number of members had been in 1911. Each state was allowed a minimum of one Representative per the Constitution, but the maximum limit of no more than 1 representative per 30,000 persons had been changed numerous times by the House. At the time of the strike, there had been one representative for every 643 thousand citizens.

In establishing the rules for this first post-strike election, Bush had persuaded the states to elect one representative per 200,000 persons. Although Alaska and Hawaii were still technically states, Alaska was essentially barren of life and Hawaii had declared itself to be a country. Several of the more northern states had extremely small populations and elected a single Representative. The House ended up with 217 Representatives, and most of them were from the southern states.

The new President was to be sworn in on July 1, 2023 and the House and Senates the day after. A Vice President, oddly enough had not been elected. It had been decided that when Bush became President, he could appoint his own Vice President under the 25th Amendment.

But, Bush hadn't won and Barbara was without a Vice President. She asked Derek to be her Vice President, but he declined because he wanted no part of the political process. She finally decided to wait for Congress to be sworn in and let them recommend someone for the post. Getting a Vice President was the least of her concerns, there was a country to rebuild and it wasn't going to be easy. Derek asked her whom to promote to take her place as the new commander of her Army. She recommended the retired Gunnery Sergeant in charge of the unit formerly based in Artesia, NM.

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Bush was bitter over his defeat and attempted to raise support for a movement to get Texas to secede from the United States. But he got so little support that he eventually gave up and headed back to his ranch in Crawford. The Texans hoped that they had seen the last of Bush, but he would prove to be like the proverbial bad penny and show up again when it was least expected. On July 1, 2023, a federal judge swore in the new President on the steps of the Capitol in Washington, DC. The following day, the same

judge swore in first the members of the Senate and then the members of the House. Do politicians ever change? The first thing the new Congress did was to declare a recess so they could return home to celebrate the Fourth of July.

A very few of the men and women elected to Congress were former Senators and Representatives, who had served in the 108th Congress, so at least someone had an idea of how Congress had operated in the past. They were older and wiser now and when Congress resumed on the 10th of July, these men and women explained how the previous Congress had worked and everything they had found to be wrong with the system. The first task tackled by the new Congress was to rewrite the rules of the House and Senate. They scheduled the first post-strike State of the Union Address for August 1, 2023, the 19th anniversary of the strike.

Barbara wasn't sure where to start. The country needed a new currency. The US Code was riddled with laws that no longer made any sense in a post-apocalyptic nation. And there was the matter of how to support the newly elected government. Finally, she had to appoint a new Supreme Court as mandated by the Constitution. And speaking of the Constitution, the Court's had interpreted and misinterpreted the document to the point that it had no longer been clear back in 2004 what the Constitution meant. She could summarize the State of the Union in a single sentence; the US was in a sorry state.

She decided on a list of attorneys to appoint to the Supreme Court. All of her candidates had been practicing attorneys at one time and were known to be strict constructionists of the Constitution. Taxation should be borne equally, she thought, so she proposed to eliminate the income tax and proposed to replace it with a sales tax with no sale being exempt from the tax. Small as it was, the federal government could probably get by with a 1% tax on all transactions. Return the country to the Gold standard she urged, paper currency was useless. She also urged the new Congress to remain true to the Preamble to the Constitution.

They could establish justice by appointing her new Supreme Court nominees, she said, and by appointing 2 federal judges for every state. They could insure domestic tranquility by returning the US Marshal Service to its rightful role that existed in the nineteenth century.

The US had an Army and Navy of sorts, Barbara told them, but this hodge-podge scheme of rotating the military among the nine state and private militias was impractical; restore a fulltime military sufficient to protect the country, but not so large as to permit the US to involve itself in the affairs of other nations.

Promoting the general welfare of the country did not mean to pay people to sit around on their behinds waiting for a government check each month. There was more work than there were people she told them and if someone had an unusual circumstance, their family and local community could lend them a hand.

All of the so-called entitlement programs made no sense in 2023, Barbara suggested.

Repeal them and while they were at it, they'd better take a serious look at all of that firearms legislation. America, she told them, was an armed camp and unless they intended to lock up 80% of the country, the NFA and all subsequent legislation regulating firearms had to go.

Barbara concluded her Address with comments on criminal justice, as it existed in the US at the moment. It made no sense whatsoever to lock someone up for committing a crime. Community service would give lesser criminals an opportunity to repay society for their offenses and learn a trade.

Violent criminals had no place in our society and should be eliminated from the society, permanently. Somewhere along the line, the country had gotten the idea, she said, that the criminals had more rights than their victims. Try the violent criminals, she suggested, and if they were found guilty, eliminate them from society.

Mistakes might be made, she admitted, but if the country expected to move ahead, those mistakes were the price of progress. Her Address delivered, Barbara sat back, in a sense, to see what the new Congress was going to do about her proposals.

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The day after her speech, a group from Congress asked to meet with Barbara. What about, a Vice President and her cabinet, they asked. Give me a list of Vice Presidential candidates that the Senate could live with, she said, and until the Congress had an opportunity to act on her suggestions, she didn't really have any idea which cabinet positions would remain.

Nineteen years of learning to survive had made a tremendous impression on the men and women elected to Congress. Their new rules provided for the government to provide for their expenses but not for a salary. The US had suffered too long they felt, under a fulltime, do nothing Congress.

The new rules would ensure that they accomplished their business and got back home and back to their real jobs. They came up with a short list of Vice Presidential candidates and then began to strip the US Code. The Code was divided into 50 titles and they had little choice but to examine each title and eliminate the provisions one chapter at a time. It began to turn into a nightmare, but if they were going to do this right, they had to do it this way.

The tradition of the Cabinet dated back to the beginnings of the Presidency itself. One of the principal purposes of the Cabinet (drawn from Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution) was to advise the President on any subject she might require relating to the duties of their respective offices.

The Cabinet includes the Vice President and, by law, the heads of 15 executive departments-the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy,

Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Labor, State, Transportation, Treasury, Veterans Affairs and the Attorney General. Under the former President George W. Bush, Cabinet-level rank also had been accorded to the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency; Director, Office of Management and Budget; the Director, National Drug Control Policy; and the US Trade Representative.

Had not someone thought to bring the computers that held the full US Code online, their task would have taken years. Even with the computerized version of the US Code, The Congress found itself still working on updating the monstrous document at Thanksgiving.

There was no simple answer, they decided, but once their task was accomplished, even a school child would understand the Laws of the United States. Early into the task, they advised President Childs to nominate Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Interior, State, Treasury and an Attorney General.

Barbara had selected a Vice President from none of the names offered up by the Senate because the list included only names of some Senators and Representatives. Instead, after much reflection, she had nominated Mary Bono Mack, formerly a Representative from Palm Springs, CA as her Vice President and the Senate had rubber-stamped the nomination.

Bono had been in Washington, DC until the day of the strike and had gone to Florida when it became clear that the asteroid had struck land and that she couldn't get back home to California.

Sensing early on that they wouldn't be able to complete the task of revamping the Code quickly, the Congress passed a series of emergency bills. The first placed the US back on the Gold standard with the price of gold being arbitrarily set at \$400 per ounce and the price of silver being arbitrarily set at \$8 per ounce. The US had production facilities in Denver, Philadelphia, San Francisco and West Point, as well as the US Bullion Depository at Fort Knox, Kentucky before the strike. However, only the Philadelphia and Denver mints were brought back into production to produce the new small denomination coinage and West Point continued to produce the gold and silver Eagles.

The second act of the Congress had been to address the question of the national defense. They halted completion of the George H. W. Bush carrier before it had even begun. The Navy would have the new Virginia class submarines Virginia, Texas, and Hawaii (renamed to North Carolina), the three Seawolf class submarines and six Los Angeles class submarines, Hampton, Hartford, Toledo, Montpelier, Boise and Springfield. These six submarines were the newest of the LA class not based in Hawaii. The US Air Force was merged back into the Army and the US Marine Corps was retained as the infantry force for the Navy, but all Marine Corps aviators became Naval Aviators. The third and final piece of emergency legislation was to impose the 1% national sales tax and eliminate the income tax.

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The Congress had developed a somewhat unique method of revising the Code. Titles 1 – 25 were assigned to the Senate and Titles 26 – 50 to the House. Working from printouts of the Code generated from the online Thomas system of the Library of Congress, the two bodies simply used a felt tipped pen to redline the portions to be removed. The revised titles were sent to the other body and then to a joint committee to resolve any conflicts that arose. As of Thanksgiving, the joint committee hadn't been necessary and President Barbara Childs was approving the enrolled legislation as it came to her desk.

As Commander and Chief of the Armed Forces, Barbara had to restore an operational military. The Admiral who had protected the US from that 'horrible' African invasion was appointed Chief of Staff of the Navy. Her former mentor and boss, Derek Olsen was appointed Chief of Staff of the Army. The latter appointment led to a confrontation of the most interesting sort. Derek refused the appointment, just as he had when Bush had tried to make him Chief of Staff. Barbara won him over when she said that it made perfect sense to her for the Chief of Staff to command a tank. "Yeah, right," Derek thought, "She'll have me riding a desk within a week."

Barbara wasn't fooling about Derek commanding a tank and she didn't want the Chief of Staff of the Navy riding a desk either. She ordered the USS Wisconsin moored at the National Maritime Center in downtown Norfolk to be returned to active service as the Admiral's Flagship. That was the problem with the US military, in her opinion, too many Chiefs and too few Indians. And, as resources permitted, Barbara intended to undo several of the 'wrongs' perpetrated against the US military beginning in the 1960's.

The USMS was part of the Justice Department and had 95 US marshals and over 4,000 deputy marshals at the time of the strike. Barbara and her Attorney General had sole authority to appoint the Marshals and she decided that the number of marshals should equal the number of Representatives in the House plus a Chief Marshal. Thus, she had 218 US Marshals and authorized them to each appoint up to 12 Deputies, depending upon their needs. The duties of the USMS would revert to their historical roles of protecting the Judiciary and enforcing the laws of the United States.

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Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, the Congress accelerated their pace, and by the time it came to break for Christmas, only Titles 20-29 remained to be revised. The US Code was on a no-fat diet and was beginning to make a little sense. The Congress promised President Childs that they would finish up and return home by the first of February. After that, they said, they would convene on the 10th of July each year and endeavor to complete their work within 2 months. Rather than complete the Bush, Barbara again commissioned the Harry S. Truman and formed a 4th carrier task group. The Reagan and John C. Stennis were ordered to sail for their homeports in San Diego.

Almost all US criminal laws are based on the Commerce Clause of the US Constitution, with the notable exception being the laws on treason. The new Congress, having completed its rewrite of the US Code, sought to adopt a 26th Amendment to the Constitution.

For the sake of uniformity, they argued, all criminal laws ought to be federal criminal laws. However, for them to be able to generate such laws, they needed more authority than that granted by the Commerce Clause. Article V of the Constitution provided that 'the Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, which, in either Case, shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof, as the one or the other Mode of Ratification may be proposed by the Congress; Provided that no Amendment which may be made prior to the Year One thousand eight hundred and eight shall in any Manner affect the first and fourth Clauses in the Ninth Section of the first Article; and that no State, without its Consent, shall be deprived of its equal Suffrage in the Senate.'

Without beating the explanation to death, one could immediately see that the Congress had a problem. The 10th Amendment clearly stated the, "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited to it by the states, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." To circumvent the States Rights issue and conform to the 10th Amendment the new Congress followed the example laid down in 1913 by 16th Amendment. Although Article I, Section 9, paragraph 4 of the Constitution prohibited an income tax, Congress had neatly sidestep that provision with the 16th Amendment which provided, "The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes on incomes, from whatever source derived, without apportionment among the several States, and without regard to any census or enumeration."

The new Amendment granted the power to Congress to make all laws defining criminal acts and the penalties thereto. While President Childs was opposed to the Amendment, the President was out of the loop on this one; only the States could ratify or refuse to adopt the new Amendment. In anticipation of ratification by the States, the Congress began to draft laws to implement the Amendment. Normally the ratification process took months or even years; and sometimes Amendments were never ratified. Much to her chagrin, the States ratified the Amendment by April 17, 2024. The Congress reassembled in special session and by a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority in both houses of Congress, passed the laws drafted earlier.

The new laws outlined the violent crimes that required the death penalty and set terms of Community Service for the lesser offenses. The most interesting provision of the new law was the definition of a habitual offender as a violent criminal whose third offense, regardless of its nature, was considered to be a violent crime. The violent crimes were

murder, non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault. And, third offense anything!

Posse Comitatus? Forget it. It was the fat in the Code. As were the War Powers Act, the Patriot Act and any number of laws the American public had taken for granted.

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As Chief of Staff of the Army, Derek expected that he would have to report to the Pentagon and ride a desk. However, when he reported in at the Pentagon, there was a set of orders from his Commander in Chief outlining her expectations of what he was to do.

Barbara instructed him to call on all 9 Armies, including his own, and recruit 8 divisions of infantry equipped with the M2, M3 and M6 Bradley Fighting Vehicles and the M113A3 Armored Personnel Carriers. He was to supplement the infantry divisions with 4 mechanized divisions equipped with Abrams, Bradleys and LAV's. The 4 Divisions of artillery were to consist of M109A6 howitzers and the M270A1 MLRS until she could persuade Congress to resurrect the defunct Crusader Self-Propelled Howitzer.

The President said he could integrate the Hummer's into his command as he saw fit. Finally, Barbara ordered him to begin replacing the M-16 and M-9 with 'real' firearms, the M-14 and the M1911. Derek ordered his jet refueled for a trip to New Mexico. He had created a monster and had to talk this one over with Gunny.

"Gunny, would you look at these orders," Derek said, all but throwing the orders in the man's face. "That's all the thanks I get for helping her get elected to the Presidency."

"Well, my friend," Gunny laughed, "If you hadn't gotten her elected, Bush would be President and he would have probably drafted you."

"Have you ever seen such micromanagement in your life?" Derek continued.

"And what, if anything would you have done different?" Gunny asked.

"Uh, probably nothing, now that you mention it, but that's not the point," Derek began to backtrack.

"What does your Dad have to say about all of this?" Gunny asked.

"I haven't talked to him; I came straight here," Derek admitted.

"Let me tell you what he would tell you if you were to ask," Gunny was grinning from ear to ear. "The M-16 is a real piece of crap, he'd say. And that 9mm pistol isn't any better. Do I have it about right?"

"Well, yeah, but..." Derek began before Gunny cut him off.

“So where do I fit into this scheme of yours?” Gunny asked.

“Take your pick, Gunny, you can be in charge of anything you want,” Derek answered.

“So, how do you want the outfits formed up?” Gunny asked, “Two infantry divisions plus a mechanized division, and artillery division?”

“Sounds about right,” Derek said.

“What about the aircraft?” Gunny asked.

“We only have 66 F-15Es and 216 F-15C/Ds,” Derek explained. “We’re a lot better off on the F-16s. Altogether, we have 306 F-16s.”

“What about the F/A-18’s?” Gunny asked.

“The Navy gets them all,” Derek answered.

“I thought we had more F-15s than that,” Gunny said.

“We do, but the Air National Guard has the 90 active duty units and the remaining 100 or so F-15s are in storage at AMARC,” Derek replied.

“How many F-16s does the Guard have?” Gunny raised his eyebrow.

“Four-twenty,” Derek responded.

“What about your cargo aircraft and the bombers?” Gunny continued.

“We have 60 B-52s, 69 B-1Bs and 20 B-2s. The Guard has another 22 B-1Bs. All 59 of our KC-10’s are on active duty. We have 51 KC-130’s on active duty and 24 in reserve. There are a total of 568 KC-135s on active duty and in the reserves and another 134 in the guard, although they well past their operating life,” Derek summarized from his notes. “As for cargo aircraft, we have 79 active and reserve C-5s and the Guard has 11; there are 120 C-17’s, 6 of them with the Guard; as for the C-130’s, 98 active, 606 in reserve and the Guard has 173. They retired all of the C-141’s.”

“Jeez,” Gunny exclaimed, “Listen to you. You sound like you’re preparing for WW III.”

“We already had WW III, Gunny,” Derek laughed, “We won it with a single shot.”

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When McNamara and his Whiz kids adopted the M-16, they destroyed most of the 1,380,874 M14’s that had been manufactured; some of them were still new in their box-

es. The M14 was originally produced for the US military by four manufacturers: TRW, Springfield Armory, Winchester, and Harrington and Richardson (H&R). Of the four manufacturers, only US Repeating Arms, the manufacturer of the Winchester line had resumed business after the strike.

On the other hand, everyone and his brother who were still in business were making variations of the M1911. When Congress officially convened in July of 2024, the President asked for an immediate appropriation to replace the M16 and M9 weapons in use by the military. The Congress approved the measure, probably because most of them had experienced using the 5.56mm and 9mm weapons.

Reassured that Gunny was aboard, Derek returned to Washington to meet with his counterpart, the Chief of Staff of the Navy. It turned out that the Admiral had received a set of orders similar to his. The Admiral was a carrier man through and through, but the President, he said, was going to reactivate the Wisconsin as his flagship. Derek knew her better than he did, the Admiral suggested, so could he explain what was up with this 'bimbo' in the White House?

"Admiral, I can tell you one thing," Derek laughed, "If she heard you call her a 'bimbo', she literally kick your butt halfway to Europe."

"A tough one huh?" the Admiral responded.

"Well, she was a Gunny in the Corps and retired after 30 years," Derek said. "Never married, either. Bill Brazos, the General in charge of the Army in New Mexico recommended her to me when I needed a new Regimental commander."

"She really seems to be a hands on President," the Admiral conceded.

"The order that I found on my desk when I got here the first time only left me discretion over what I am to do with my Hummer's," Derek explained. "She's even dumping the M16's and M9's in favor of the M-14's and M1911's. I just learned that she got Congress to approve an emergency appropriation to get Winchester to build the rifles."

"I heard that too," Admiral Robert "Rocky" Balboa replied. "Who is going to build the .45's?"

"I don't know, but the Colt plant is intact, so maybe Colt," Derek replied. "Let me ask you a question. How are your equipped with aircraft for your carrier task groups?"

"We have F/A-18 Hornets, SH-60 Seahawks, S-3B Vikings, E-2C Hawkeyes and EA-6B Prowlers in ample quantity to equip all four carriers and maintain reserves," Rocky replied. "Do you have enough tankers to meet our needs?"

"Explain that to me," Derek responded.

“As far back as the first Gulf war, the Air Force did most of our air-to-air refueling,” Rocky said, “So, can you continue in that role?”

“Easily,” Derek replied, “We probably have more tankers than any other type of aircraft. The real question is who is there left to fight?”

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That was the \$64 question. Certainly not the Chinese, Japanese or Koreans and the Africans hadn't shown much heart for a fight. Most of the Russians had been caught in the immediate aftermath of the strike and the Europeans were only slowly rebuilding after being kicked out of Africa.

But, the oldest struggle in the history of mankind had only been put on hold and it was far from over. The struggle had begun in 1095 and lasted for centuries. Eventually the open warfare had declined but the hearts of the 'enemy' still burned with a desire for revenge. To these people, it was a holy war, a jihad that would only end when the last infidel was driven from the face of the planet.

In the 20 years since the strike the nations of the Middle East had been doing a little scrounging of their own. They were now equipped with the T-90 tanks (fancy T-72), BMD-3 and BMP-3 (think Bradley) and BTR-90 (LAV25?). Their air forces consisted of a mixture of the MiG-29, MiG-31 and the Su-27 and the aircraft were the match for anything in the American fleet except for the F-22s. They also had the Hind and the Havoc helicopters.

Far more important was the other thing they had, time. Having suffered through two wars with the US, the remaining Iraqis had experienced American fighting doctrine first hand. They hadn't learned anything from the first Gulf war, but they had from the second and the abrupt departure of the American forces had left behind a cadre well schooled in the American battle tactics.

They had survived the strike; most of Saudi Arabia was below the 30th parallel, and everyone simply moved south to the heart of the Muslim religion. The Palestinians and Israelis continued to wage war, it was a never-ending struggle, but the other Arab nations did not take part for they had bigger plans. By 2020, the Arab nations had done a pretty decent job of cleaning out Russia and they began to train in the American tactics. And while the US was busy repelling the African 'invasion' the Arab countries were busy testing their new tactics in a go-for-broke attack on the Israelis.

Realizing that the Israelis would go nuclear at the drop of a hat, the Arabs pre-empted the Israelis, courtesy of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. It was another 6-Days War only this time with a different outcome. The Israelis were fearsome fighters, but they had no idea that the Arabs were equipped with the latest Pakistani ballistic missiles and by the time the Israeli Defense Force's radar picked up the incoming missiles, the battle was all but

lost. In the 6 days that followed, the Arab nations tested their new battle tactics and in the end, Israel fell.

Unfortunately for the Arab nations, the Russians hadn't had much of a Navy. There was a single aircraft carrier, 4 cruisers, 22 destroyers and 19 frigates in the Russian Navy at the time of the strike. The Russian submarine force had included only 18 of the conventional Kilo class submarines and the Arabs weren't about to touch the nuclear subs with their less than safe reactors. Russia's Pacific fleet had been destroyed in the strike, but it had consisted mostly of nuclear submarines and a fair portion of the surface Navy was intact, such as it was. They could field a single carrier task group, centered on the Russian carrier and 2 cruisers. They had 12 destroyers and 10 frigates. The transition of the Russian fleet from the Baltic went mostly unnoticed and no one caught the movement of the Black Sea fleet.

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"Hey Gunny," the technician hollered, "What do you make of this?"

The Gunnery Sergeant looked over his technician's shoulder at the display on the screen. "I have no idea, store it and print it out and we'll get a photo analyst to check it out," the Gunny replied.

The photo had captured the Baltic fleet well east of Gibraltar. In the subsequent pass, the fleet was beyond the range of the satellite. The photo was forwarded to Washington to be examined by the two Joint Chiefs, Derek and Rocky. And therein lay the rub, Derek was busy assembling his forces at Ft. Benning and Rocky was overseeing the recommissioning of the USS Wisconsin in Norfolk.

A Brave New World – Chapter 2 – Doing It Right

The Pentagon had been reduced to little more than a large empty landmark when the new President insisted that the Chiefs of Staff run their commands from the field. When the photo arrived of the ships east of Gibraltar, someone decided that since the photo was of Russian ships, it should be forwarded to Rocky.

History repeats itself and in this case it could have come down to the infamous warning sent to Pearl Harbor that the Japanese might be going to attack. Just hours before 8am on December 7, 1941, the US deciphered the Japanese diplomatic message and attempted to warn Pearl Harbor, but due to a communications problem the notification went by ordinary cable. Had those ships been steaming in the other directions, history could have repeated itself. Fortunately, it only took the photo a day to get to Rocky and Rocky about 10 minutes to get in touch with Derek.

US Repeating Arms Company was barely back in business when approached by a Presidential aide concerning resuming production of the M-14 rifle. While the firm was truly grateful for the business, they were concerned about the volume of weapons they could produce. After all, it had taken 4 companies 7 years to produce the nearly 1.4 million weapons and that was when US industry was running at full speed. But, they accepted the contract; subject to their only being required to produce 100,000 weapons a year. The issue with the M1911's wasn't nearly so difficult to resolve. Thousands of weapons were in the hands of DCM.

When Congress resumed on July 10th they had few items on their agenda. They had just spent the better part of a year eliminating laws and were loath to add new ones. The drain on the federal government had been reduced from a flood to a trickle with the elimination of the entitlement and welfare programs.

Under the revised US Code, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs fell within the providence of the Secretary of Defense. Education, Health and Human Services and Housing and Urban Development were neatly rolled up into a single department, Human Resources, and Energy and Transportation were added to the Department of Interior. It looked like Congress could get done in a month; all they had to do was develop and fund a budget and approve the President's new nominee for Secretary of Human Resources.

Then, a person approached one of the Senators asking for a piece of special interest legislation. The Senator was polite to the lobbyist, nodding and smiling at all of the appropriate moments, but getting angrier by the moment. The Senator was a simple man from Alabama who had made his living from the soil for most of his 60 years.

The lobbyist was an attorney from his home state who wanted, of all things, a farm subsidy. The Senator had seen how those farm subsidies worked back before the strike and wanted no part of them. He introduced a bill to prohibit special interest legislation and the tacking on of riders to otherwise critical pieces of legislation. The new Congress

saw the benefit in the bill and both bodies passed it with a clear majority. President Childs signed the bill and made a note to include term limits in her State of the Union Address.

Derek had rushed to Norfolk when he'd heard from Rocky. The last time they'd photographed ships in the Mediterranean Sea, Africa had 'invaded'. Rocky had in the meantime reached out to the Reagan and John C. Stennis and ordered them to return to Norfolk. The men decided that they'd have to involve the President in this one.

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"What do you have for me?" Barbara asked.

"Well, it might be nothing Madam President," Derek said, "But they took this photo at the Mountain last week and Rocky and I thought you ought to have a look at it."

"What am I looking at here?" she asked.

"Madam President, it appears to be what's remaining of the Russian Black Sea Fleet sailing westward in the Med," Rocky explained.

"I thought the strike took out all of the Russians," Barbara remarked.

"We did too," Derek said, "But how else can we explain this group of Russian ships in the Med?"

"Beats me," Barbara answered, "Can we reposition one of those satellites to the eastern Med?"

"We only have 2 Satellites and the prospects of launching new ones in the foreseeable future are pretty remote, so I'd suggest we send a sub to check on those ships," Rocky suggested.

"Make it happen and get back to me," Barbara said, "Is there anything else I should know?"

"Now that you mention it, yes," Derek said. "When I got to the Pentagon the first time, there were orders there telling me exactly how I was to organize MY command. What I'd like to know is if you're going to run everything, what do you need me for?"

"I'll buy into that," Rocky added, "You may be the Commander-in-Chief and all, but just where in the hell do you get off telling me how to run MY Navy?"

"But boys," Barbara laughed, "Those were just suggestions!"

"Uh-huh," Derek replied, "Is that why they began with, 'By Order of the Commander-in-

Chief?”

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“I’ve been thinking,” Gary announced.

“Oh crap, Clarence, we’re in trouble now,” Ron laughed.

“What have you been thinking about Gary?” Clarence smiled.

“I’ve been thinking that being the new Congress is changing the laws and Constitution so much it would be a perfect time to do something about those lawyers and reporters,” Gary answered.

“Jeez Gar-Bear,” Ron laughed, “What did you have in mind? There isn’t any news media anymore.”

“They’ll come floating to the surface, just like pond scum,” Gary retorted, “Now’s the time to fix them before they have anything to say about it.”

“But Gary,” Clarence protested, “What about freedom of speech?”

“But Clarence,” Gary mocked, “What about my right to privacy?”

“Hey you two, this will get you nowhere,” Ron shouted them down. “Hell, the Supreme Court couldn’t even completely agree on a balance between the two.”

“Well, we could resolve the whole matter if we said that libel and slander were violent crimes,” Gary retorted. “I’d bet that those reporters would think twice if their lives were on the line.”

“Good luck, partner,” Ron laughed. “What do you want to do with lawyers, shoot them too?”

“Why waste the bullets?” Gary laughed, “I’d prefer to hang them; we could use the rope over again.”

“I’ll give you credit for one thing Gar-Bear,” Ron shook his head, “At least you’re consistent.”

And, maybe old Gar-Bear was just a little more right than wrong. It hadn’t always been like that in America, at least not so far as the freedom of the press went. As newspapers began to compete more and more with one another to increase circulation and obtain more advertising revenue, a different type of journalism was developed by publishers Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst.

In the mid-1890s, Pulitzer (in the New York World) and Hearst (in the San Francisco Examiner and later the New York Morning Journal) transformed newspapers with sensational and scandalous news coverage, the use of drawings and the inclusion of more features such as comic strips.

After Pulitzer began publishing color comic sections that included a strip entitled "The Yellow Kid" (right) in early 1896, this type of paper was labeled "yellow journalism." Drawn by R.F. Outcalt, the popular (if now-unfunny) strip became a prize in the struggle between Pulitzer and Hearst in the New York newspaper wars. Outcalt moved the strip to Hearst's papers after nine months, where it competed with a Pulitzer-sponsored version of itself.

"The Yellow Kid" proved the first merchandising phenomenon of the comics. The character was portrayed in keychains and collector cards, appeared on stage and even had a short-lived magazine named after him.

The papers themselves trumpeted their concern for the "people." At the same time, yellow journalists choked up the news channels on which the common people depended with shrieking, gaudy, sensation-loving, devil-may-care kinds of journalism. This turned the high drama of life into a cheap melodrama and led to stories being twisted into the forms best suited for sales by the hollering newsboy.

The phenomena was brought to new heights when radio, and then television, competed for listeners. By the time of the strike, news organizations were trying to outdo each other describing the wall of water expected to hit the Pacific Rim. CNN had the best graphics, but FOX had the best 'scientific experts'. Newspapers were struggling to reestablish themselves, not as national scandal sheets, but as purveyors of the local news.

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The states that opposed the 26th Amendment brought suit in federal court to have the Amendment ruled unconstitutional. In response, to the suit, the states that had supported the Amendment approached the Congress requesting an additional Amendment making all federal judges, including the Supreme Court an elective office. With $\frac{3}{4}$ of the states calling for another Constitutional Amendment, Congress was trapped. They were working on the proposed Amendment when President Childs gave her second State of the Union Address. In that speech she brought up the subject of term limits.

One would have thought she'd offered Congress a pay raise. Come to think of it, she probably had; since they were only being compensated for expenses, representing their fellow citizens was costing the Senators and Representatives more than they had ever imagined. Those Senators and Representatives who were retreads didn't take to the proposal too kindly, however; they were all lawyers. They threatened to block the Amendment the States had requested and the Senator from Alabama started to check into their backgrounds.

Between the lobbyist and the lawyers in Congress, the Senator had about had enough. He consulted a couple of colleagues and then began to approach the lawyers one at a time. He told them he was going to introduce a law to bar attorneys from being members of Congress and needed their advice on how to word the new law. They offered to support the Constitutional Amendment if he would drop his proposed law; this was, after all, the give and take that always went on in Congress. When he had the votes to pass the Amendment requested by the states, the Senator called for a vote and the measure passed.

Ratification of the Amendment, requiring the election of all federal judges came easily because the States requesting the Amendment were all that were required to ratify. On the day following the ratification by the final state, the Alabama Senator introduced the term limits bill. The legislators with whom he had made deals were furious. They had a deal, they insisted, and if he didn't honor the deal, they would block all of his future legislative proposals.

The Senator denied knowledge of any deal and said they must be mistaken; he didn't want any record of his participation on the audiotape he was making of the meeting. The following day the Senator played the tape for the Chairman of the Senate Ethics Committee and pointed out that the new Senate rules prohibited intimidation in any form.

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Rocky dispatched the Seawolf, SSN-21, to the eastern Med to locate the missing Russian fleet. The Seawolf class was perhaps the best submarine the Navy had. They were far quieter than the 688I class submarines and were built of much better steel. The Navy, in its infinite wisdom, had abandoned the class back in 1992 because of cost, replacing it with the Virginia class submarine.

Meanwhile at Ft. Benning Derek and Gunny had completed the organization of the Army units and were engaged in a conversation with the General commanding the air forces.

"You realize that there are 38 F-22's at Langley AFB, don't you?" General Chris Norton commented. "They were scheduled to complete 24 in 2004, but only completed half of them due to the strike."

"What does the F-22 give me that I don't have with the Strike Eagles and Falcons?" Derek asked.

"The F-22 was supposed to replace the Strike Eagles, just as the F-35 was supposed to replace the Falcons," Chris explained.

"How many of the F-35's do we have?" Gunny asked.

“None,” Chris said, “They weren’t scheduled to be delivered until 2008.”

“You’d better get those planes operational Chris, the Navy sent a sub to the eastern Med to check on those Russian ships,” Derek directed.

“I thought all of the Russians were killed off in the strike,” Chris replied.

“Probably most of them were,” Derek answered, “At least, that’s the conventional wisdom. Some of them might have made it to the Middle East or Africa, but someone is moving their fleet.”

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Because of the ‘grandfather clause’ in the 27th Amendment, existing federal judges remained appointed for life. President Childs had selected the judges carefully, preferring to appoint only the most senior members of the legal profession. Thus the 27th Amendment would take effect sooner than even the Congress had anticipated.

However, there was a fight brewing in Congress over the alleged intimidation of the Senator from Alabama. The truth be known, a lot of the members of the House and Senate were farmers, storeowners, and businessmen who didn’t cotton much to lawyers. At one time or another before the strike, many of them had had dealings with lawyers that had left a bitter taste in their mouths for the legal profession. After a hurried up hearing, both houses of Congress expelled the lawyers whose voices were caught on tape.

The Senator from Alabama immediately introduced the 28th Amendment to the Constitution, barring lawyers from serving in Congress. The measure passed, in no small part perhaps because most of the lawyers had been booted from Congress. Whether or not the States would ratify the radical Amendment remained to be seen.

Barbara Childs didn’t have time to follow the antics of the Congress. She was faced by more immediate concerns like resupplying water, natural gas and electricity to the northern cities and getting American industry up and running. From her viewpoint, it didn’t make much sense for the military to sit around on their butts waiting for the next war to come along, if indeed there were to be a next war. She called for her Chiefs of Staff to come to the Oval Office.

“We have to get this country back up and running, gentlemen,” Barbara said, “How about the Army getting up to the major northern industrial centers and getting the utilities turned back on?”

“We don’t have a very large Corps of Engineers,” Derek objected.

“So what?” Barbara said, “Texas and Oklahoma are feeding natural gas into the system and it shouldn’t be too hard to get the water supplies running.”

“What about electricity?” Derek asked.

“We’ve been looking at that,” Childs answered. “About 5% of the electrical capacity of the country came from hydroelectric sources before the strike. Since we’ve lost 90% of our population, more than half of our electrical needs can be met from the dams.”

“What about the other half of our needs?” Rocky asked.

“As a temporary measure, we can use the nuclear power plants,” Barbara answered, “But in the long run, we’ll have to shut the reactors down, so we need to look at the renewable sources like wind and solar power. If you can get some of the manufacturing plants back on line, we can concentrate on producing turbines and solar panels.”

“That really doesn’t sound like a military mission to me,” Derek responded.

“I’d agree with you if you hadn’t waylaid me into this job, Derek,” Barbara laughed, “But you did, so live with it. Look, all I’m suggesting is that you get the utilities up and running. With the sorry state of the electrical grid in this country, your engineers are going to be busy for years.”

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“You know don’t you,” Rocky said, “That what she’s suggesting makes sense.”

“Yes, but where are we going to get people to run those nuclear power plants?” Derek asked.

“Well, the Navy is pretty much nuclear powered, so how about we take care of those?” Rocky suggested, “You can get the water supplies up and running and the gas turned back on.”

“Have you heard from the Seawolf?” Derek changed the subject.

“Just cleared the Straits of Gibraltar,” Rock reported, “So we don’t know anything yet.”

“I have a bad feeling about this,” Derek commented.

“I doubt we’re going to fight anymore wars Derek,” Rocky said. “From a military standpoint, I believe that the US is still the most powerful nation on the earth. All the conflicts we’ve fought since WW II have been because the US was afraid to fully flex its muscles. There isn’t any more so called court of world opinion, so when you think about it, we’re pretty much free to stop a war before it begins.”

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The Seawolf had deployed the longer, Starboard TB-29A towed array; but when they arrived in the eastern Med, they slowed to a crawl and the array began to drag on the bottom, so they reeled it in and deployed the shorter, Portside TB-16D. They could detect none of the Kilo class submarines and slowly came to the surface looking for either ships or submarines. Having no idea where the Russian vessels might be, they began looking in Turkey and followed the coast to Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, and Libya. With its scouting mission complete, the Seawolf contracted Rocky. The Russian vessels had been located in Egypt, but of equal interest was the high level of background radiation coming from Israel.

It appeared that they had no choice except to reposition the satellite on the prime meridian to 30 degrees east longitude. The KH-12 satellites had been launched in 2004 and should have fallen to earth before 2010. They remained in orbit only because of their larger fuel capacity and an automatic system that raised their orbit when they came too near the earth. As it was, this would be the only time they could move the Improved Crystal satellite. Derek reluctantly gave the order to reposition the satellite and Rocky and he left for Ft. Carson and the Mountain. When they arrived, the Marine technicians advised them it would be several hours before they had pictures for them to review. Derek decided it was time for the Admiral who had won WW III to meet the three old geezers.

“Dad, I’d like you to meet Admiral Rocky Balboa,” Derek said, introducing Rocky to Gary.

“Rocky Balboa, huh?” Gary said, “You looked different in the movies.”

“That was Sylvester Stallone, Dad, this is the Admiral who led the Navy against the Africans,” Derek laughed.

“Is it true that you let them all go?” Gary asked.

“Yes Sir, they weren’t looking for a fight, just a new home,” Rocky explained. “When they turned tail for Europe, we let them go.”

“You’ll be sorry,” Gary abruptly remarked.

“I’m Ron Green,” Ron introduced himself, “And this fella is Clarence Rawlings. Don’t mind Gary, Admiral, he’s a little out of touch these days.”

“Oh, does he have a health problem?” Rocky asked, concerned.

“No, he’s just mad because Congress didn’t change the 1st Amendment,” Ron laughed. “Old Gar-Bear doesn’t think much of politicians, reporters and lawyers.”

“He ought to be dancing in the streets,” Derek grumped, “Congress passed term limits, made all federal judges elected and barred lawyers from serving in Congress.”

“Oh REALLY!” Gary sat up, “Why doesn’t anyone ever tell me when there’s good news?”

“We told you butthead,” Ron said, “The problem with you is you can’t remember anything anymore.”

“What brings you and Sly out here to Ft. Carson?” Gary asked. “I thought you were off in Washington protecting us from the bad guys.”

“There seems to be a buildup in the eastern Med,” Rocky explained without giving too much information.

“Nuke ‘em,” Gary said.

“Do you mind if we figure out who they are before we nuke ‘em?” Derek asked.

“Do whatever you want, you will anyway,” Gary said, “But then, nuke ‘em.”

“I’ll stop by and see you when we’re ready to return to Washington Dad,” Derek said.

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The photos revealed one aircraft carrier, 2 cruisers, 12 destroyers and 10 frigates berthed in Alexandria plus close to 30 submarines. They also saw T-90 tanks, BMD-3 and BMP-3 armored vehicles and BTR-90’s. In addition to the Russian vehicles, there were over 200 M1A1 Abrams tanks, build by Egypt under American license. At the Nouzha airport, a fleet of aircraft including the MiG-29, MiG-31, Su-27 and French Mirage fighters plus the Hind and Havoc helicopters could be seen.

It appeared from the photo that several large oil super tankers were in the port being modified. The entire port was circled by a tent city, apparently for infantry forces. This couldn’t wait; they had to return to Washington.

“So, Madam President, as you can see, there is an extensive buildup in the Alexandria area,” Rocky summarized.

“Am I wrong, or are they better equipped than we are?” Barbara asked.

“We have the larger Navy, but there must be several million troops in the area,” Rocky replied.

“Can we stop them if they invaded?” Barbara inquired.

“Probably,” Derek replied, “But my Dad had a better suggestion.”

“What was that?” Barbara asked. Barbara knew Gary and had a pretty good idea what Gary had suggested.

“He said, nuke ‘em,” Derek answered.

“And, what do you say?” Barbara pressed.

“Well...” Derek hesitated.

“I agree with Gary,” Rocky commented dryly. “Send up the B-2’s armed with the B-83 nukes and wipe out the entire bunch of them.”

“Why the B-2’s?” Barbara asked, “We have a whole fleet of Minuteman III missiles we can launch.”

“Only on paper, Madam President,” Derek explained, “Most of those missiles are past their useful lives. A flight of 2 B-2’s would put 32 1.2-megaton bombs on target and eliminate the enemy if that’s your decision.”

“Are you recommending that we strike first Derek?” Barbara asked.

“I not making any recommendation Madam President, that choice is yours,” Derek answered. “I’m just saying that if you decide to make the first strike you should plan on using the B-2’s like Rocky recommends.”

“Ok, I’ll let the two of you know my decision in a day or two,” The President responded.

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Later at the Pentagon, Rocky asked Derek, “I wonder why she didn’t authorize a first strike right on the spot?”

“Rocky, the US has never been the first to strike to my knowledge,” Derek answered, “And I’m not so sure we should make a first strike with nuclear weapons. You have enough firepower in those 3 Seawolf submarines to take out their whole fleet and most of their land and air forces. If we made a preemptive strike with conventional weapons, no one could come along later and condemn the country in any meaningful way.”

“But the Seawolf class subs don’t have any VLS tubes,” Rocky protested.

“True, but the Virginia class have 12 apiece,” Derek countered.

“Well, I suppose we could use the Jimmy Carter to launch Harpoons and the 3 Virginia class subs to launch Tomahawks but I think that’s pretty risky,” Rocky half agreed.

President Barbara Childs knew the capacity of all of the weapons systems at her disposal and had decided early on what her response would be. Derek and Rocky were right; the US had to strike first. On the other hand, someone had to end this cycle of hatred that had lasted over 900 years.

Her oath of office said it all, “I Barbara Childs do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.” Since the Arabs were taking time to modify those tankers, she didn’t have to hurry; she could take her time and reflect on her decision. But, no matter what she decided in the end, someone was sure to disapprove.

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